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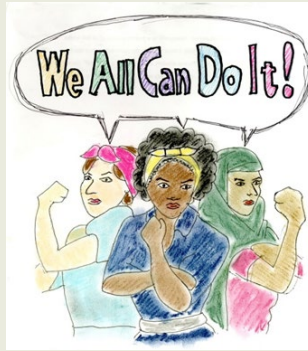
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Challenging Violence against Women and Girls in Post-Conflict Settings: Learning from women activists.

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Research Purpose

- ▶ Conceptualise women's activism in post conflict societies
- ▶ Understand the impact of division and identity based conflict on VAWG activists / activism
- ▶ Vice versa



Methodology

- ▶ Qualitative, feminist research
- ▶ Life history method
- ▶ 10 activists in each field site – Namibia and Northern Ireland



Themes

- ▶ The nature of post conflict division
- ▶ The concept of colonising women
- ▶ Activists' responses



Data – Post Conflict Division

“Apartheid happened - it was the whites who had everything all the power. After independence it was BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) and it again you could only apply if you were certain tribe People just see your tribe. You’re first Ovambo before you are a person, you’re first a Damara before you are a person: we don't see each other as humans first.”

P1, Namibia



Data – Post Conflict Division

“It is in working class areas where these differences are rammed home between Catholics and Protestants. Those peace lines in Belfast are not going through (middle-class) Stranmillis... I would say the first thing to do would be to get rid of those walls and integrate education... I can't see how it is not fundamental to changing this entire city.”

Olivia, Northern Ireland



Data – Post Conflict Division

“I don't think I've ever met a complete stranger in Namibia who hasn't asked me what tribe are you. And for them it was very important to know my tribe first before continuing the conversation. You don't really get that in other countries. I mean you get it in South Africa where someone will start speaking to you in their language but there isn't that question of are you Zulu or are you Xhosa?”

P2, Namibia



Data – Post Conflict Division

“At this point in time women within the (participant’s) community are far, far more liberal to be able to speak about it (VAW) than they are within the (name of other) community. We do know they are more oppressed and more under the hammer... It's all to do with male dominant paramilitary control and money and the drugs and all.”

P1, Northern Ireland *



Data – ‘Colonising Women’

“When I talked to young people about gender based violence.... Most of their experiences they could relate to their culture. So, we could really see the complexity of it, that every culture and how they approach or follow up gender-based violence is different...In my culture, really a woman has to be submissive... Because culture is used to colonise, to control”

P3, Namibia



Data – ‘Colonising Women’

“A woman told us that her daughter sleeps with a knife under her pillow because her ex, a paramilitary, is very violent and he keeps breaking into the house.....So, she went to the paramilitaries... and they told her to take herself off. Then she went to the police and she said my daughter has to sleep with a knife under her pillow and she named him.... And the police said “is that right? What's your daughter's name?” Because she was committing an offence!”

P2, Northern Ireland



Data – ‘Colonising Women’

“The white, the black, and the German culture are pretty much the same when it comes to the place of the woman in the household..... I draw a strong correlation between the Damara, Oshiwambo and white Afrikaans male and how they treat their wives and their daughters.”

P4, Namibia



Data – ‘Colonising Women’

“One thing that the two sides agree with ... is that women are the last thing on the list. And so whatever way that comes out, being the last thing on the list may be different across Catholics and Protestants But I still think that the priority is always the same: we'll just trot along these Green vs Orange views forever and we'll not really get down to proper political issues because gender equality and social justice are just frivolous.”

P3, Northern Ireland



Data – Activists' Responses

“We had to take on *NAME* from the Namibian Police and we stood up and it was a massive, massive gathering. And from there on was the 1 Billion Rising March...We decided to form a coalition on violence, that's the latest, latest one, the informal coalition. And maybe because it is informal it has survived so far. So it is made out from various groups of organisations and women”

Rosa, Namibia



Data – Activists' Responses

“Because we had something to work towards it brought us all together that worked. And everybody gelled and there was more unity... And then of course you've also have emerging at the same time, young, energetic, enthusiastic activists you know... We're all pulling together. ”

P4, Northern Ireland



Data – Activists' Responses

“I'm back in the community; I'm working with Republican women and Loyalist women and we're talking about violence against women and abortion, you know, these cross community issues that are so important to all of us. And I hate that whole let's look at our similarities and forget about our differences. Our differences are just fine. If you want to be Irish be Irish. If you want to be British be British. Just don't f*ing murder anybody over it - ok?”**

P5, Northern Ireland



Interesting Themes

- ▶ The nature of post conflict division
- ▶ The idea of culture as a coloniser of women
- ▶ The activism being pursued



Reflections

- ▶ Important to explore what we mean by culture as an accused coloniser in this example.
- ▶ “Culture is a neglected pathway to women’s justice.”
(Tamale, 2008: 55)



Reflections

- ▶ Ethno-centrism
- ▶ Ethno-nationalism
- ▶ Identity based division
- ▶ Violent conflict
- ▶ Impact of colonialism



Reflections

- ▶ Explore how VAWG activists collectivise these complex issues (Htun and Weldon, 2012)
- ▶ And how individual VAWG activists are left holding issues that don't become collectivised (Barcia, 2014)

References

- ▶ Barcia, Inmaculada. 2014. *Our Right To Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection*. Toronto: Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID).
- ▶ Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2012. The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005. *American Political Science Review* 106: 548–69.
- ▶ Tamale, Sylvia. 2008. The right to culture and the culture of rights: a critical perspective on women's sexual rights in Africa. *Feminist Legal Studies* 16: 47–69.